



Date: May 20, 2015  
To: Office of the City Clerk  
15th Floor, City Hall  
City of Regina

Submitted via: Email to [clerks@regina.ca](mailto:clerks@regina.ca)

From: The Realm Foundation

Re: Request to make a presentation to City Council on May 25th, 2015 regarding the purchase of 2 Paratransit buses supported with additional operating hours

My name is Amanda Lewis and I am the Executive Director of the REALM Foundation and I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address Council today.

REALM, a Regina based organization, believes that people with high physical disabilities who use wheelchairs and require attendant services, should have the opportunity to build good relationships and live the lives they choose through the development of volunteer support networks. At the center of each network is an individual with a high physical disability resulting from traumatic injury, acquired disease or congenital disorder. We call them Centres.

Successful network development is a 3-4 year cycle. At the end of that cycle, a Centre and network should be strong enough to function on its own, without support from REALM, and be fully accountable for its own success. REALM is unique in our approach, there is currently no other organization in Canada whose vision is that every person with a high physical disability is supported by a volunteer network and is accountable for his or her own success. Skills learned through this process are transferable to other areas of a Centres' lives, including employment, health and financial management, volunteerism, problem solving and developing additional social supports.

REALM provides training to the Centres and facilitators to develop skills needed in order to build and manage a successful network. Training sessions are held on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon several times a year and many of the Centres rely on Paratransit as their method of transportation. REALM has been directly impacted by a lack of Paratransit resources and the inability to book regular service for people to attend training.

Contact Us • Phone 1.306.522.3242  
email: [info@realmfoundation.ca](mailto:info@realmfoundation.ca)  
[WWW.REALMFOUNDATION.CA](http://WWW.REALMFOUNDATION.CA)

We believe that people with high physical disabilities have unique needs that require additional supports in order to live their best lives. Effective and accessible transportation is one of those supports. Without effective and efficient transportation persons with disabilities cannot become active members of the community, will become more isolated and are not able to “benefit equally from their citizenship”.<sup>1</sup>

For many people with high physical disabilities the only viable transportation option is Paratransit. We are asking you to approve the purchase of two new paratransit buses supported with additional operating hours.

The REALM Foundation believes there are important transportation issues in Regina requiring attention and on behalf of the Board of Directors and the REALM community, we ask you to consider the following:

- i. To reduce the Paratransit refusal rate in Regina to no higher than the standard Canadian rate of 1-2%<sup>2</sup>. In 2014, the City of Regina rate for refused or ‘unaccommodated’ bookings was 5.3%; that is 9,612 trips that registered users were not able to take, an average of more than 26 bookings each day. Not only does this result in reduced revenue for Paratransit, the cost and impact on persons with high physical disabilities is significant.
  - It creates isolation especially in the winter.
  - It increases financial stress when a person is forced to use an accessible taxi.
  - It can negatively impact a person’s health when he/she cannot get to a doctor’s appointment, an activity or program.
  - It reduces opportunities to be active, contributing members in the community.
  - It reduces opportunities to live their best life.
  - It creates a society of exclusion rather than inclusion.
  - It eliminates the ability to make spontaneous plans and take advantage of last minute opportunities, something the rest of society takes for granted.
  - It affects employment when a person cannot guarantee transportation to and from a job or must suddenly adjust their work hours to accommodate the paratransit bus.
- ii. Increase the number of Paratransit buses. As reported in the Leader Post, May 5, 2015, the City of Regina has 31 Paratransit buses (2014). There is a plan to add 2 additional Paratransit buses and increase operating hours by 4,000 hours. These additional buses and hours will not be enough to address the existing deficiencies nor those created with increased population and an increased aging population.

---

<sup>1</sup> Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission ‘Achieving Equivalent, Comparable, and Accessible Public Transportation in the City of Regina: A Report to Stakeholders’ June 3, 2013

<sup>2</sup> The Leader Post article May 5, 2015 written by Natascia Lypny

- iii. Organizations such as ours that occasionally require several people with high physical disabilities to attend a group course, support or social activity rely on Paratransit to transport them from many areas of the city to one location and back home again. In order to simplify the booking process, for everyone concerned, REALM does one booking. We are having increasing difficulties arranging this service and have been advised by Paratransit our best option may be to charter our own Paratransit bus. At an estimated 3 hours of service per event, this could add more than 10% to our annual operating budget, money that could be used to help financially support another support network.

The City of Regina wishes to be “Canada’s most vibrant, inclusive, attractive, sustainable community where people live in harmony and thrive in opportunity”.<sup>3</sup> Paratransit is the only viable transportation option for many people and without adequate Paratransit resources, the City of Regina will not be inclusive nor can it be a place for all populations to thrive in opportunity.

Persons with high physical disabilities face many barriers every day. Adequate transportation should not be one of them.

Please consider the famous quote from the movie *Field of Dreams* “If you build it they will come”. Without more Paratransit buses and operating hours, you can try and build an accessible and inclusive community but many people who rely on Paratransit service will not be able to reach it.

Thank you for your time.

Amanda Lewis  
306-537-5991  
info@realmfoundation.ca  
www.realmfoundation.ca

---

<sup>3</sup> City of Regina “Imagine Regina 2020”